

KODIAK MANAGEMENT AREA  
COMMERCIAL HERRING FOOD/BAIT FISHERY  
HARVEST STRATEGY, 2004



By

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## **ABSTRACT**

The 2004 Kodiak herring food/bait fishery may open, by regulation, on October 1, 2004. However, due to market concerns, it could open earlier, in September, by emergency order. The fishery may occur on Kodiak herring stocks in that portion of the Uganik District south of the latitude of Miners Point with a 102 (short) ton guideline harvest level (GHL), the Eastside District with a 90 ton GHL, and the Uyak District with a 33 ton GHL. The remaining districts are either closed due to the low Kamishak herring biomass estimates, or are areas where the food/bait GHL would be less than 10 tons and therefore not manageable. The department is concerned that a competitive fishery, with all permit holders participating, would also be unmanageable given the low GHLs. Therefore, in addition to current regulations, stipulations for a potential cooperative (co-op) fishery are specified in the harvest strategy.

# **KODIAK FOOD/BAIT HARVEST STRATEGY**

## ***Introduction***

The Kodiak Management Area (KMA) commercial herring food/bait fishery has a long history, dating back to 1912 (Gretsch 2001). Early harvests were primarily utilized for food and reduction products; these harvests far surpassed current levels. Since the early 1960s the harvest has been utilized mainly as bait for crab and longline fisheries.

In recent years, the majority of the harvest from the food/bait fishery has occurred in the northeast Shelikof Strait of the KMA (Figure 1) with the fishery targeting a mix of Kodiak and Kamishak herring stocks (Johnson et al.1988). The Kamishak Bay District Herring Management Plan (5 AAC 27.465) outlines criteria for the management of the Kamishak Bay sac roe fishery and provides for a harvest allocation for the Kodiak food/bait fishery, based on the Kamishak spawning biomass. The Kamishak spawning biomass has been below the minimum threshold for a fishery for the last five years. The Kamishak management plan stipulates that when the Kamishak herring stock biomass is below threshold then the Kamishak Bay sac roe fishery and the Kodiak food/bait fishery in Shelikof Strait north of the latitude of Miners Point will remain closed (Figure 2).

For the remainder of the KMA, the food/bait fishery is allowed to occur in those districts that have strong spawning stocks of Kodiak herring. The management plan that guides the KMA food/bait fishery is described in the Kodiak Area 2003-2004 Commercial Herring Fishing Regulations (5 AAC 27.535). This harvest strategy will summarize current regulations and the management of the fishery for the 2004 season and specify stipulations for a potential cooperative (co-op) fishery.

## ***Guideline Harvest Levels and Open Districts***

The herring food/bait fishery guideline harvest levels (GHLs) are based on the preceding herring sac roe fishery season's GHLs, with 10% of that GHL, by district, allocated to the food/bait fishery.

The 2004 KMA food/bait fishery may occur on Kodiak herring stocks in that portion of the Uganik District south of the latitude of Miners Point at 57° 54.00' N lat. (Figure 2) with a 122 ton GHL, the Eastside District with a 75 ton GHL (Figure 3), and the Uyak District with a 33 ton GHL (Figure 4). The remaining districts are either closed due to the low Kamishak herring biomass estimates, or are areas where the food/bait GHL would be less than 10 tons; a competitive fishery on such a relatively small GHL is not manageable and would likely result in a gross overharvest.

## **LIMITED ENTRY**

In 2001, the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) designated the KMA herring food/bait fishery a limited entry fishery. In July 2002, the CFEC issued limited entry permits to

nine individuals based primarily on fishery participation in the 1994 to 1998 seasons. Five combination purse seine/gillnet and four trawl permits have been issued.

## **CO-OP FISHERY**

Cooperative (co-op) fisheries occurred during the 2001, 2002, and 2003 herring food/bait seasons. Due to department concerns of controlling the harvests in areas with relatively small GHLS, competitive fisheries were not allowed. Since the market demands for fresh herring bait were strong, the permit holders requested that the department allow co-op fisheries to occur. The department agreed under certain guidelines, including 100% agreement by all CFEC permit holders, only one fishing vessel would conduct the harvest, and a department observer would be onboard the fishing vessel to monitor the fishery. Permit holders were fully responsible for determining which vessel would conduct the harvests, all marketing aspects, and all costs associated with harvesting and tendering the herring. Permit holders agreed to the department's stipulations and co-op fisheries were successfully conducted during the 2001 through 2003 herring food/bait seasons.

## **2004 FISHERY**

Due to the small available GHLS available for the 2004 fishery and the harvest capabilities of five purse seine vessels and four trawlers competing for the fish, the department is again concerned about the manageability of the Kodiak herring food/bait fishery. In order to slow and control the harvest, the fishery will only be opened by emergency order. A management biologist will need to be on the fishing grounds to assess the availability of fish, fishing effort, and capability of the fleet. Any fishery opening will likely be of short duration in a limited area. If, in the opinion of department personnel, there is a potential for overharvest due to the effort present, a fishery will not be allowed.

In order to facilitate a fishery, several permit holders have begun discussions concerning a co-op fishery for the 2004 season. The department will consider a co-op fishery under the same guidelines as required during the previous three seasons. All nine permit holders must notify the department that either they support a co-op fishery or they will not participate in the 2004 fishery, before the department would consider opening a co-op food/bait fishery. The department would require that only one catcher vessel be used and that a department observer be onboard the fishing vessel during any fishery. The department observer would monitor the harvest, close the fishery when the GHLS is reached, and collect commercial catch samples for age composition data.

Some permit holders and processing industry representatives have requested that the department open the fishery prior to the regulatory opening date of October 1. An early opening would make fresh bait available for the Bering Sea king crab fishery, which begins October 15. The department received a similar request for the 2003 season and opened the fishery on September 21, 2003. The department will consider opening the fishery prior to October 1, to facilitate market needs.

However, this earlier opening may only occur if approved by the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Director of the Division of Commercial Fisheries, and after notification of all CFEC Food/Bait fishery permit holders.

## **REGULATIONS**

### ***Registration***

Permit holders must be registered with the ADF&G managers in Kodiak before participating in the food/bait fishery (5 AAC 27.510. (3)(b)). Buyers and tender operators must also be registered prior to taking KMA herring (5 AAC 27.540).

### ***Season Dates***

The fishery may open by emergency order, between October 1 and February 28, or earlier if approved. News Releases will be issued to announce fishery opening dates and open areas. The duration of fishing periods and areas opened to fishing will be determined by department management biologists, based on effort and availability of the herring. The fishery will be closed when the GHL has been harvested for each district. News Releases will also be issued that announce the closure of each district, after the GHL has been reached.

In the event that CFEC permit holders agree to form a co-op for the 2004 food/bait fishery, the fishery may open without restrictions on the duration of fishing periods.

### ***Closed Waters***

Herring may not be taken in the closed waters described in the 2002 - 2005 Kodiak Commercial Salmon Fishing Regulations (5 AAC 18.350; pages 93-96). These closed waters are in effect for the herring food/bait fishery through October 31. Closed waters may be reduced by ADF&G management staff, if needed to access the herring food/bait, but only by emergency order.

### ***Gear Restrictions***

Following are the gear restrictions for purse seine/gillnet and trawl permit holders for the Kodiak food/bait fishery. Only one gear type may be fished at a time for the combination permit holders.

#### **Gear Code**

- 01 - Purse Seine
  - Maximum length: 150 fathoms
  - Maximum depth: 1,625 meshes. For Area K there are no web size restrictions.

- 34 - Gillnet
  - Maximum length: 150 fathoms; mesh size: 2-1/8" to 2-1/2".
  - No depth restrictions.
  
- 07 - Trawl
  - No restrictions

Consult the 2003-2004 Commercial Herring Fishing Regulations for a complete listing of all regulations.

### **FISH TICKETS**

All fish tickets must be completed and sent to the Kodiak Fish and Game office within a week of each landing.

Send to: Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
ATTN: Dennis Gretsche  
211 Mission Road  
Kodiak, Alaska 99615



## **LITERATURE CITED**

- Johnson, B.A., C. Burkey, and D. Gaudet. (Draft manuscript 1988). Stock Identification of Pacific Herring in the Bait Fishery in Shelikof Strait, Alaska, 1985/86. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries. Juneau.
- Gretsch, D.R. 2001. Kodiak Management Area Annual Herring Fisheries Management Report, 2001. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries, Regional Information Report 4-K02-25, Kodiak.

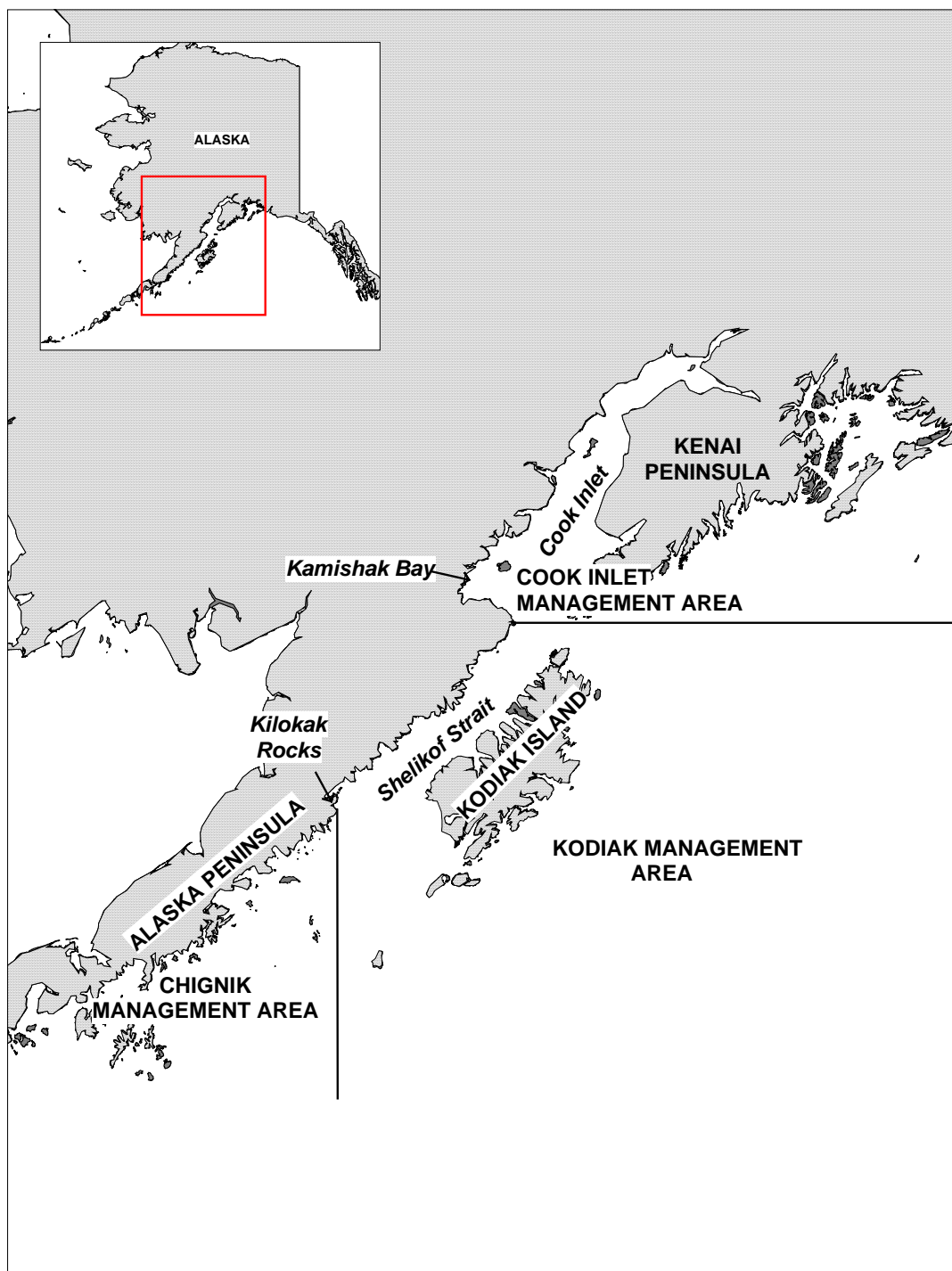


Figure 1. Map of southwestern Alaska emphasizing the Kodiak Management Area and its relationship to surrounding management areas.

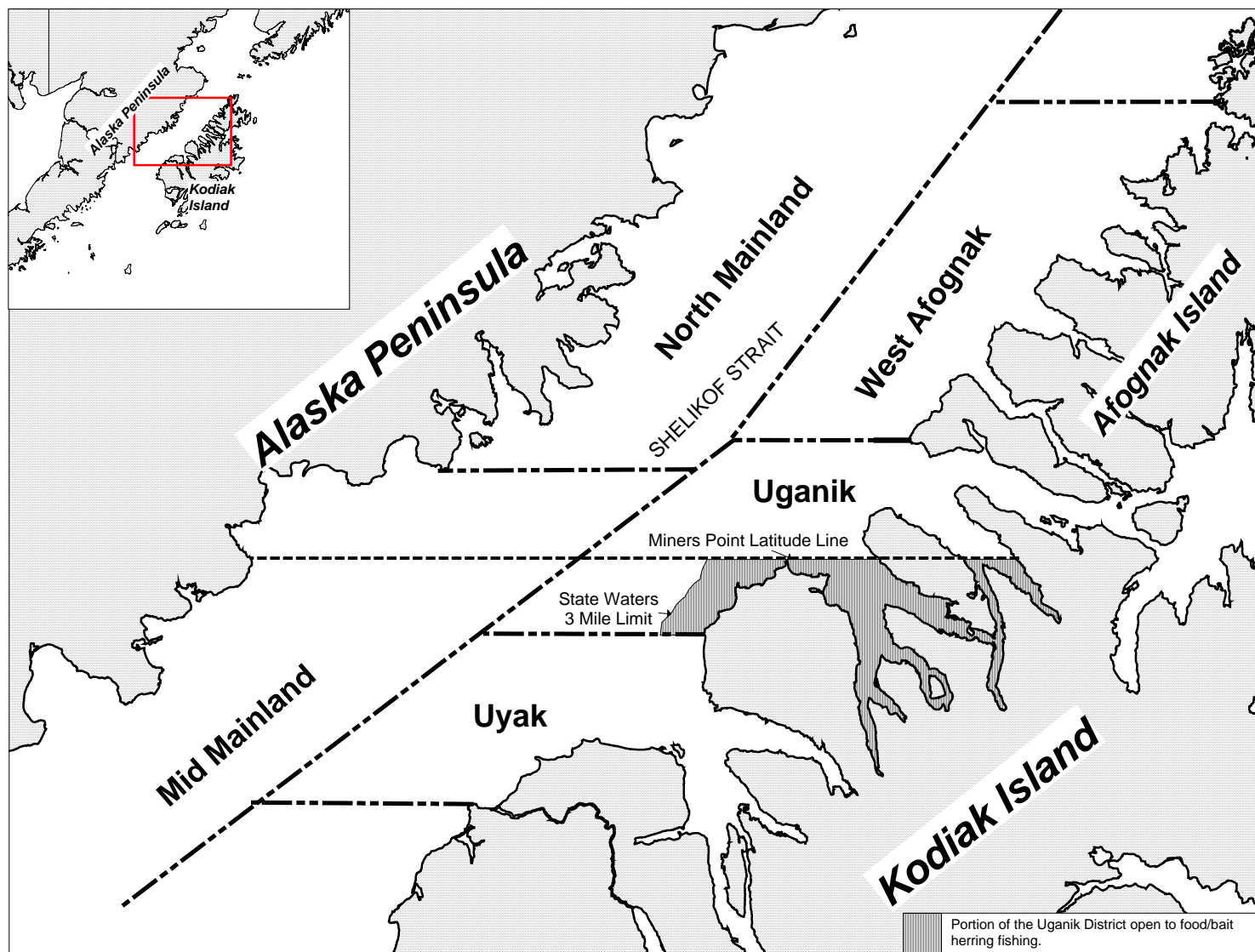


Figure 2. Map of the North Shelikof Strait and the Uganik Food/Bait District (F/B 4) showing that portion south of the latitude of Miners Point that is open to herring food/bait fishing for the 2004 season.

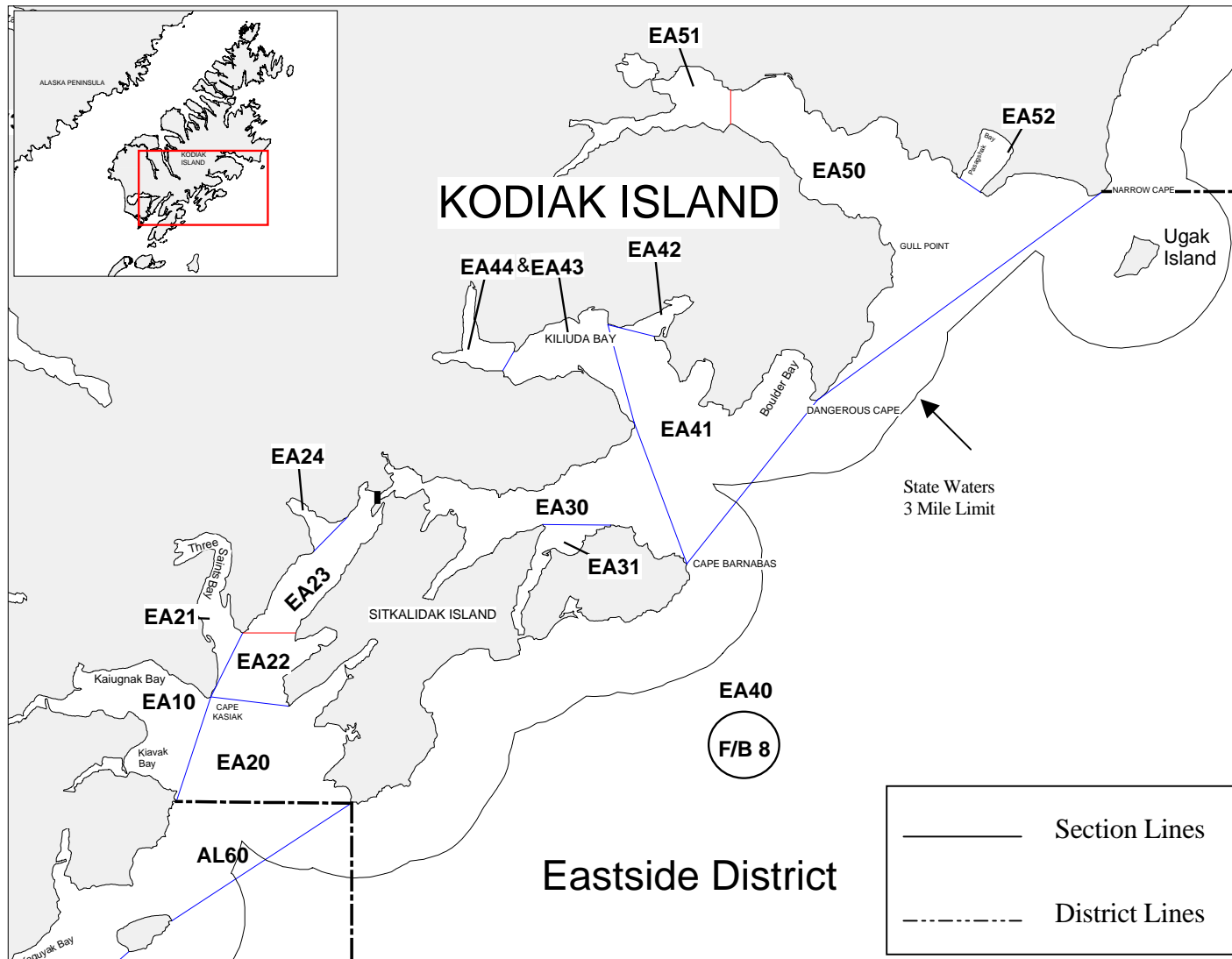


Figure 3. Map showing the Eastside Food/Bait District (F/B 8) and management sections.

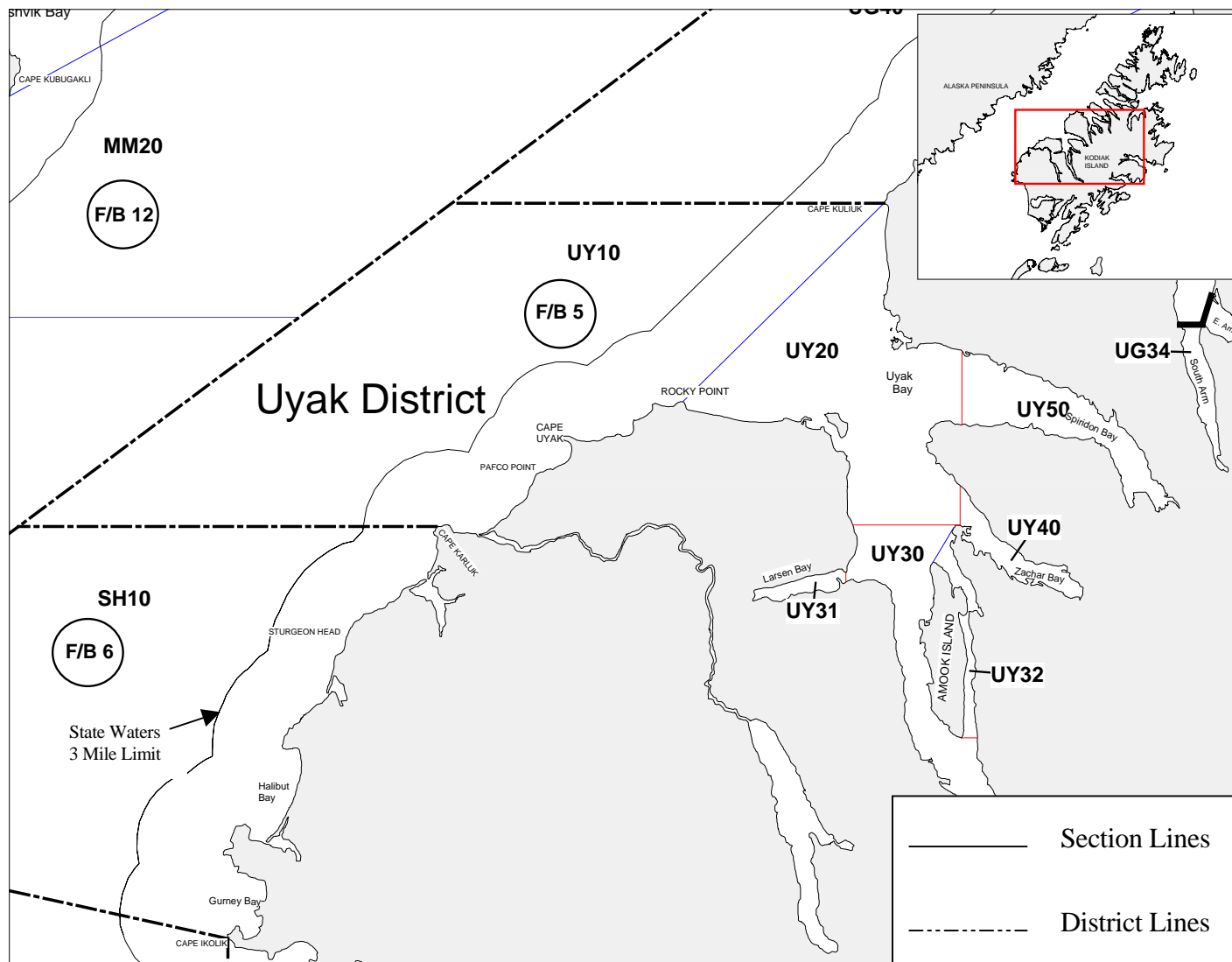


Figure 4. Map showing the Uyak Food/Bait District (F/B 5) and management sections.

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